

CUPCAKES/ Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 350°F. Line eighteen ½-cup muffin cups with paper liners. Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt in medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat butter in large bowl until smooth. Add sugar; beat on medium-high speed until well blended, about 2 minutes. Add 2 eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition and occasionally scraping down sides of bowl. Beat in seeds from vanilla bean and remaining egg. Add half of flour mixture; mix on low speed just until blended. Add 1 cup reduced coconut milk; mix just until blended. Add remaining flour mixture; mix on low speed just until blended. Divide batter among muffin cups.

Bake cupcakes until tops spring back when gently touched and tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Transfer cupcakes in pans to rack; cool 10 minutes. Carefully remove cupcakes from pans and cool completely on rack.

FROSTING/ Using electric mixer, beat butter in large bowl until smooth. Add sugar, ½ cup reduced coconut milk, seeds from vanilla bean, and salt. Beat on medium-low speed until blended, scraping down sides of bowl. Increase to medium-high and beat until light and fluffy.

Using pastry bag fitted with large star tip, pipe frosting onto cooled cupcakes. (Alternatively, top each cupcake with 2 tablespoons frosting. Using small offset spatula, swirl frosting over top of cupcakes, leaving ½-inch plain border.) Sprinkle with coconut. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Store in airtight containers; chill. Bring to room temperature before serving.

*/ Available at many supermarkets and at Indian, Southeast Asian, and Latin markets.

COFFEE-CHOCOLATE LAYER CAKE WITH MOCHA-MASCARPONE FROSTING

10 TO 12 SERVINGS/

CAKE

- 2 cups cake flour
- ¾ cup natural unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1½ teaspoons baking soda
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2 cups (packed) golden brown sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 4 teaspoons instant espresso powder dissolved in ¾ cup hot water

FROSTING

- ⅓ cup natural unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon instant espresso powder
- 1½ cups chilled heavy whipping cream, divided

- 1⅓ cups sugar
- 2 8-ounce containers chilled mascarpone cheese*
- Bittersweet chocolate curls (optional)

CAKE/ Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 325°F. Generously butter two 9-inch cake pans with 2-inch-high sides; dust with flour, tapping out any excess. Line bottom of pans with parchment paper.

Sift 2 cups cake flour, cocoa, baking soda, and salt into medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat butter in large bowl until smooth. Add brown sugar and beat until well blended, about 2 minutes. Add eggs 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix in vanilla. Add flour mixture in 3 additions alternately with buttermilk in 2 additions, beating just until blended after each addition. Gradually add hot espresso-water mixture, beating just until smooth.

Divide batter between pans; smooth tops. Bake cakes until tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Cool cakes in pans on rack 15 minutes. Run small knife around sides of pans to loosen cakes. Invert cakes onto racks; lift pans off cakes and remove parchment. Place wire rack atop each cake; invert again so top side is up. Cool completely. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Wrap each cake in plastic and store at room temperature.

FROSTING/ Sift cocoa powder into large bowl; add espresso powder. Bring 1 cup cream to boil in small saucepan. Slowly pour cream over cocoa mixture, whisking until cocoa is completely dissolved, about 1 minute. Add ½ cup cream and sugar; stir until sugar dissolves. Chill until cold, at least 2 hours. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover; keep chilled.

Add mascarpone to chilled cocoa mixture. Using electric mixer, beat on low speed until blended and smooth. Increase speed to medium-high; beat until mixture is thick and medium-firm peaks form when beaters are lifted, about 2 minutes (do not overbeat or mixture will curdle).

Using pastry brush, brush off crumbs from cakes. Place 1 cake layer, top side up, on platter. Spoon 1¾ cups frosting in dollops over top of cake. Using offset spatula, spread frosting to edges. Top with second cake layer, top side up, pressing to adhere. Spread thin layer of frosting over top and sides of cake. Chill 10 minutes. Using offset spatula, spread remaining frosting over top and sides of cake, swirling decoratively. Top with chocolate curls, if desired. **DO AHEAD** Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover with cake dome; chill. Let stand at room temperature 20 minutes before serving.

*/ An Italian cream cheese; sold at many supermarkets and at Italian markets.

DOUBLE-GINGER SOUR CREAM BUNDT CAKE WITH GINGER-INFUSED STRAWBERRIES

12 TO 14 SERVINGS/ Ground ginger and crystallized ginger amp up the flavor of the cake; fresh ginger adds a spicy hit to the fresh strawberries. The Bundt pan is coated with raw sugar before the batter is added, giving the cake a sparkly crust.

CAKE

- Softened butter (for brushing pan)
- ½ cup raw sugar*
- 2¼ cups all purpose flour
- 4 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup chopped crystallized ginger

GINGER-INFUSED STRAWBERRIES

- 1 2-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled, very thinly sliced
- ⅔ cup water
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 quarts fresh strawberries, hulled, halved (about 8 cups)
- Sliced fresh mint leaves (optional)

CAKE/ Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 350°F. Brush softened butter generously all over inside of 12-cup Bundt pan. Sprinkle raw sugar over butter in pan, tilting pan to coat completely.

Whisk flour, ground ginger, baking powder, and salt in medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat 1 cup butter in large bowl until smooth. Add 2 cups sugar; beat on medium-high speed until blended, about 2 minutes. Add eggs 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in 1 egg yolk and vanilla, stopping to scrape down bowl as needed. Add flour mixture in 3 additions alternately with sour cream in 2 additions, beating on low speed just until blended after each addition. Mix in crystallized ginger. Spread batter in pan, being careful not to dislodge raw sugar.

Bake cake until top is light brown and tester inserted near center comes out with a few small crumbs attached, about 55 minutes. Transfer to rack; cool in pan 15 minutes. Gently tap bottom edge of pan on work surface while rotating pan until cake loosens. Place rack atop pan and invert cake onto rack; remove pan. Cool completely.